

Highways And Byways In Chinese Crime



BY PERCIVAL FINCH



Reprinted from
THE SHANGHAI SUNDAY TIMES
April, 1925.

Sc. 11 10 112 7
M 6

Highways And Byways In Chinese Crime

BY PERCIVAL FINCH

This short description of the Crime Museum at the Central Police station does not pretend to cover the whole field of Chinese Crime, but rather to explain the Chinese criminal by what he does and the things he uses.

Reprinted from
THE SHANGHAI SUNDAY TIMES
April, 1925.

SMALL THINGS COUNT AMONG CHINESE CROOKS

A set of diamond-pointed tools do not a burglar make, nor a pack of cards a card-sharper. It is the brains behind them that make the successful "crook." This reason, together with the amazing attraction of small pickings in a land where people live and grow fat on what a foreigner would consider practically nothing, is why a collection of Chinese criminal relics will never surpass the exhibits in the crime museum at Scotland Yard, or Madame Tussaud's exhibition, which went up in flames recently to the despair of the morbid-minded.

It is surprising with what insignificant stock-trade a Chinese gentleman of dishonest propensities can fool and cheat his fellow men, and others. Tucked away in two small rooms at Central Police Station is a collection of criminal relics which represent, pictorially, the history and developments of crime in Shanghai during the past 25 years. It is the Municipal Police Museum. And if there is a lack of the exhibits which formerly drew many sixpences from visitors to the Rogue's Gallery at Tussaud's it is fully compensated by evidence of the peculiar mental processes of the Chinese. You will hear from people well-acquainted with Chinese ways that their mode of thinking really is very simple. Perhaps it is among the peaceful element of the four hundred millions, but among those who daily make Assessors and Magistrates at the Mixed Court rack their brains, groan and sigh, the brain works in very devious channels.

Take one single exhibit in the museum. In one of the glass cases marked "Bombs and assassins' implements" is a bundle

of Chinese books, cheap copies of the classics stuffed with food for meditation and enlightenment for the learned. These books were originally packed in paper with a piece of board at the top and bottom. What a feast of good reading for the recipient. The highest form of present to a literati. But the police will just move the top board and let you look inside. A square cavity had been cut inside the books to hold a bomb which, so soon as the string was cut, would explode, blowing the literati to kingdom come. Only the inexpertness of the man who manufactured the bomb saved the book-loving recipient from the fate plotted for him, the bomb merely fusing. Now the whole thing rests under a glass case as an object lesson to book-lovers who fall under the incubus known as the "Blood and Iron Societies."

A survey of the exhibits in the two rooms gives the same impression of dark, daring deeds at a minimum of expense. There is a little gambling machine with a clock face. You drop a coin in a slot at the top and it sets clock-work in motion which revolves a pointer. The pointer stops at figures on the clock face and the gambler receives the prize corresponding with the number. Like most of these things owned by men who are not exactly philanthropists, it can be regulated.

A clever little dice shaking apparatus is another exhibit. The dice, three in number, are in a saucer and to shake them the gambler places a cup on top, holds cup and saucer in his hand and shakes. This looks fair enough, but the man who owns the game can always make certain that one of the three numbers will turn up. Inside the cup is fastened a wad

of paper. When he shakes he places this wad on one of the three dice, holding it firm, and in reality only shakes the other two. This little dodge produced a small fortune until the police stepped in.

Like all things, crime has made wonderful strides in China. One exhibit is a collection of knives used by the old-fashioned armed robbers. There are all sorts of knives—bowie knives, table knives, hunters' knives, daggers ranging from 15 inches to only a few inches, some cheap weapons with wooden hafts, others very dainty things with pearl hafts. These were the weapons of years ago. Now the robbers use expensive automatics with six, seven, eight and even ten cartridges in the magazine. But even in the pistol line there have been developments. Relics of 25 years ago when the collection was begun, show the old-fashioned cap pistols, nearly like blunderbuses.

The pistol and revolver exhibits show a remarkable range in weapons. There are pretty little vest pocket pistols and huge revolvers. There are revolvers with elaborately carved butts, cowboys' six-shooters more at home in the hands of Bill Hart, the movie strong man of the roarin' West, rather than in the slim yellow fingers of a Chinese armed robber. How they got to China is a mystery. Looking at them one can picture other days and other parts where they might be used....strong, silent man in the mountain defiles of the Westpoof, bang....the villain fallsand the strong silent man in sheepskin pants and slouched hat bites a bit out of the butt to keep a tally of his murders.

One unusual exhibit is a home-made pistol—a piece of piping fastened on a piece of wood with many strands of wire and a touch hole for the match. There are also modern automatics, grim and ugly-looking, and novelty pistols of

many kinds, including a sort of pistol machine-gun. All these pistols were taken from armed robbers, and many of them took their fill of blood before resting in the glass cases. These belonged to real robbers.

Another case nearby shows another development—the use of toy and dummy pistols by robbers who want to minimize the consequences of their crimes if caught. A large number of these dummy pistols have been shipped into China in recent years, and many of them find their way into the possession of robbers. In the dark and dramatic tension of a robbery, they are hard to detect, the best type being a cheap metal copy of a pistol or revolver, with no mechanism. But this type was forestalled by the Chinese. Rough, carved imitations, painted black, are to be found in the museum, and one weapon which brought its user a goodly amount of booty was nothing more dangerous than a piece of iron broken from a loom in a cotton mill, the iron bearing the very general resemblance to a pistol.

The "murder" cabinet is more like a show case in an ironmonger's shop. There are hatchets, axes, knives, razors, and hammers, all of which have been used to commit some fearful crime, and some of which still bear the mould of bloodstains. In past years an axe was the popular weapon for striking down the victim. Nowadays an automatic pistol, so easy to buy or hire, does its work much better and easier. Every one of the implements in this cabinet has its own history, too horrible to relate. One was used to murder a magistrate in the Great Eastern Hotel 13 years ago, another was used by a man who ran amuck in Sinza several years ago, another was used to chop up a Chinese whose body, terribly mutilated, was found in Great Western Road ten years ago.

As burglars using scientific instruments to open safes and strong boxes, the Chinese are far behind Western "crooks." A cabinet in the museum contains a good assortment of jemmies, drills, bits, skeleton keys and burglarious instruments, but none are so advanced as those used in England. Showing the ingenuity, however, of one burglar is a three inch auger, with a powerful tooth, with which the owner performed dozens of burglaries before he was caught. The gimblet is so sharp that he was able to bore holes around the lock in the door and remove the lock in this way in a few minutes, not the least noise being heard.

Chinese thieves operate in other ways. The "cat burglar" is the

latest crime sensation in Eng and, but he is nothing really new. "Cat burglars" have been known in Shanghai for years. The museum contains a few of their devices for scaling high walls and entering bedrooms on the first and second floors. The most popular device is a rope with a hook or an iron bar, thickly padded, on it. The burglar throws the hook so that it catches on the verandah rail and then climbs up the rope. Creeping, silent as a mouse, about the bedroom he is able to collect as much as he can carry, and then drops to ground, via the rope.

So it looks as if even in crime the young West may search into the annals of the ancient East and find that everything repeats itself.



MAKING MONEY IN SHANGHAI IS SURE WAY TO GAOL

Like London, Shanghai is the city of dreams come true for millions of people. The highway to Shanghai is the highway to success and opulence, for once here there is an infinite variety of ways in which a Chinese can make money, even more than in London, where gold bricks are to be bought for a shilling and shares in diamond mines for eighteenpence. A man can turn the perspiration of his brow into beads of gold, he can win the Champions, he can join the ranks of those gentry who wax fat making others rich, or he can, in the literal sense of the phrase, make money. And of all methods of amassing wealth by illegal methods, there is no surer way of detection, arrest and imprisonment than by the latter road of making money.

One interesting cabinet in the Municipal police crime museum contains piles and piles of crisp, crackling notes, in that beautiful condition of being straight from the mint. There are humble ten cash notes and impressive hundred dollar notes, and they represent nearly every bank in Shanghai—and a good many outside Shanghai. But each one tells a story of an effort to grow rich by methods not sanctioned by the many clauses of the Chinese Criminal Code. There is a man, or men, and a gaol sentence attached to all of these notes but one, and this one is the work of a man whose handiwork has often been seen by detectives, but who has so escaped them that legends of his prowess have combined to make him a semi-mythical figure. If any criminal can be a genius this man is certainly one.

While counterfeiting is one of the commonest crimes in Shanghai, the many processes requiring infinite patience and application to

perform, and small profits satisfying the makers, there is only one man who has done this trick. Few people are aware that most foreign bank notes in Shanghai are two-ply notes, that is, made of two sheets of paper stuck together. The mysterious Wong X, we will call him, knew it and this knowledge enabled him to convert 12 notes into 13 without the least pretence at magic. His trick is to get 12 notes, split them, fold each of the sheets into twelve parts, and then tear one narrow strip from each two sheets making front and back of the note. By continuing a sequence of strips, front and back, he has 24 strips which, fitted together, make one note. That is his profit. With the 12 original notes, each mutilated to the extent of one strip, he covers that narrow portion with a piece of stamp edging, or adhesive paper, as if the note had been torn and repaired. Therefore he has 13 notes made out of 12, and has little difficulty in passing them. His profit for such extremely clever and expert handiwork is ten dollars in \$100. He has defied the police for years. His work is the only exhibit the story of which does not conclude in the records of "sentences received."

Counterfeiting in Shanghai is an offence for which the police have to exercise the keenest vigilance. There is something about the copying of bank notes which appeals to the avaricious instinct in the Chinese criminal and although the campaign against forgers is prosecuted relentlessly year after year there is never any decrease in the number of people who will try their hands at this way of making money. At the present time there is very little in circulation, but a new use has been

found for it. Arms dealers often use it to pay seamen bringing arms ashore. The arms are generally handed over at night: the seaman wishes to get the business over quickly and only hurriedly glances at the notes, but when he gets to sea he finds his money is "fake" paper. Was ever there such case of diamond cut diamond?

Counterfeiting is not only a mere money-making crime: it has been used in China for political purposes, to smash up banks, to create mutinies and rebellions, to destroy the credit of institutions of long standing. During the revolution of 1911, floods of worthless bank notes, Republican military notes, were poured into the market to help the revolutionary cause, but as they contravened all economic laws their value fell to nothing after a few weeks.

One pile of forged Szechwan Military bank notes in the museum tells of an attempt to foment a rebellion in Szechwan in the early part of 1915. These were seized, together with complete plant for printing them, at a house in Dent Lane. Four Chinese were arrested and convicted and the principal, before he was shot—counterfeiting under Chinese law is punishable by death—frankly admitted to the police that he was a revolutionary and had manufactured the notes for distribution among the soldiers in Szechwan so that he could gain their confidence and encourage them to mutiny. This was the first move in a plot to start a revolution and capture that province.

The revolutionary period and afterwards contributed a large number of forged note exhibits to the museum, for every revolutionary clique resorted to this means of raising military funds. One sheet of 30 Hupeh Provincial Bank notes, each of 100 coppers denomination, has behind it one of the most gruesome episodes in the history of local crime. Millions of notes were printed in Shanghai for circulation in Hupeh, where

a revolution was planned. Most of these notes were printed on the instruction of Chinese revolutionary agents. The history of their manufacture opened with murder. Two well-known Japanese printers disappeared from Shanghai and later two heads, identified by the teeth as belonging to the bodies of the missing Japanese, were found floating in the Whangpoo. A few days later two pigskin boxes were opened by the Customs at Chinkiang and two headless bodies were found inside. They were buried, but Shanghai Municipal detectives later exhumed them, identified them as the missing Japanese, and started investigations the result of which was that several Chinese and the wife of one of the Japanese were arrested. The trial of the men proved to be one of the longest hearings in Mixed Court records, the prisoners appearing in Court 36 times before a conviction was secured but even then the Court would not convict on the murder charge.

Counterfeiting is an art which demands much labour and diligence, and it is this capacity which probably makes counterfeiting so alluring to the Chinese. There are many stages in the manufacture, from the preparation of the design to the actual printing, and in each of them the skill of the Chinese counterfeiter is amazing. Considering that very rarely is he able to secure the elaborate devices available to the Western counterfeiter, his work is remarkable. Once the note to be counterfeited is selected, an artist sets to work to copy the design on a large scale because most notes have such a wealth of intricate and minute detail that photographic enlargement is practically impossible. The artist, therefore, copies the design in sections, carefully counting and noting all the tiny curves and flourishes. This design might take as long as nine months to prepare, as one design now in the museum actually took.

The design is then photographed and lithographed, and from the final lithograph notes are printed. The majority of the work is in the design: when that is completed satisfactorily the printing is easy. The pride of the police collection is one design which was seized by the police before the notes had been printed. Experts gave the opinion that had the notes been put into circulation the bank would have been ruined and because the design approached absolute perfection, not a single detail being omitted.

Most counterfeiting is done on Chinese banks, foreign banks enjoying a strange immunity. For instance, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank enjoys the reputation of being the least affected by counterfeiters, this fact being attributable to the very ornate design of their notes. The majority of frauds practised on foreign banks is to raise the value of the notes—that is, alter the figure of denominations on a small value note and make it a larger value. This is a common trick, but the forgery is easily detected under a magnifying glass. Chinese banks fall chief victims to counterfeiters because most of them have their notes designed and printed in China, and not by any of the English and American bank note printers who possess greater resources for defeating the counterfeiter.

The better the note the more difficult is it to detect the fraud. Nevertheless, stupid errors have made the detection very easy in some cases. One note had this error in spelling "By order of the Board of Dipectors." Another bank note had the figure 1 missing from the date, which was 1st June, 1907. The letter "i" in the word "received" on one note appeared with the dot above it omitted. That little error cost the man who presented

it several years' liberty. One counterfeiting gang fell into their own trap. A design was laboriously prepared and a local printing firm was asked to print the note. Unfortunately for the counterfeiters, this firm's engraver had been entrusted with the job of drawing the original note on the bank and he told the police, who arrested the men.

In making "dud" coins a similar high grade of skill is displayed, but the job is much easier owing to the fact that the coins of some recognized mints are far below bullion value. The museum contains a complete collection of coin counterfeiting plant. This generally consists of plaster moulds for taking impressions of the coin and machines for milling and finishing. As the original value of the coin is so small the metal contents of these coins are generally antimony, tin and lead. This is not the case regarding one most remarkable coin exhibit—English sovereigns. These coins are undoubtedly counterfeit, but there was nobody in Shanghai who could pronounce an expert opinion upon them. The police knew they were counterfeit because they bore the minting year, only a week or two of which had elapsed, and it was known that sovereigns could not have reached Shanghai in so short a time. Bankers in Shanghai said they were undoubtedly gold sovereigns, but were they sovereigns? Examination by the London Mint established the fact that they were gold—but not sovereigns. Analysis showed that out of 1,000 parts composition, 772.9 were pure gold, 13.3 silver and 213.8 base metal, chiefly copper. The gold weight was 121.8 grains with an approximate value of 16s. 6d. giving a profit of 3s. 6d. for minting. These coins were widely accepted in Shanghai as genuine English sovereigns.

ANARCHISM IN SHANGHAI BROUGHT WOE TO CRIMINALS

China has learned much about crime from the West where science is used to combat science in the preservation of peace and order. One particular branch of study is anarchism, and the art and mystery of making, despatching and using bombs to remove objects of political obstruction or to convince a man that there is no nonsense about a preliminary letter asking for a "loan" of \$10,000. China, however, did not learn the subject thoroughly—which accounts for the big death-rate among anarchists.

Persons with unquenchable hatred of other persons and institutions are to be found in all countries, but China is one of very few where there are persons who take up anarchism as a trade just the same as street hawking, or picking pockets. After the famous Sidney Street siege in London, when Mr. Winston Churchill further expanded his versatility, anarchism has grown to be a world's joke revolving about almost mythical personages like Peter the Painter, or his descendant, Boris the Bolshevik.

In China anarchism has flourished among the radical elements with congenital grouses against society, but, on the whole, the danger has been more picturesque than real. Anarchism has been imperfectly assimilated in this country, and as such things as bombs are dangerous to handle when the handler knows little about them, the evil effects have more often been transferred to the user. A man cannot learn the art of manufacturing bombs by superficial reading: he needs practical tuition. The result is that in China, more would-be anarchists whose imaginations have been attracted by the sensational-

ism attached to bomb throwing have fallen victims to their own acts than the subjects of their malicious desires. This fact is demonstrated by the exhibits in the Municipal Police crime museum.

"And did this kill anybody?" you ask when seeing one of the deadly array now peacefully reposing under the glass top of the bomb cabinet. The answer is generally: "Yes—it killed the man who made it," and your attention is directed to a gruesome picture on the wall of the ghastly, mutilated body of a Chinese student who tried to serve his country at Shanghai North Station by throwing a bomb, but fumbled it and killed himself.

Nevertheless, it is amazing how many persons in Shanghai, and also how many institutions, in the course of a year fall under the incubus of the bomb danger. A wealthy Chinese merchant, with commercial interests known to the public, is never free from this danger. He is frequently the subject of mysterious communications which tell him of the advantage to his present existence of making a "loan" to someone who will meet him or his agent at the third electric light pole past an alleyway in a certain street—or some other place of devious situation. Strange societies signing themselves the "Shanghai Iron and Blood Society" or the "East Chekiang Assassination Corps" spring up and distribute their missives among the law-abiding population. These societies are gangs of loafers needing money, and the best way of getting it is by intimidating some rich Chinese by post. Occasionally, they attempt to carry out their threat by

sending him a bomb disguised in some harmless package, so that a public figure is always wary of strange presents delivered to his house.

Theatres and cinema houses in Shanghai sometimes get publicity by the fact that bombs mysteriously explode inside during a performance. Traced to its source, it is always found that someone has tried to extort money from the management and the bomb is the answer to the management's denial. Political societies of hotheaded youths with minds inflamed by revolutionary literature smuggled in from European centres, take a fancy to bomb throwing, but such societies worked chiefly during the period of a few years before to a few years after the Revolution of 1911. At the present day, revolutionary ideas have been merged into Communism, which does not include bombs as a principle.

The police museum includes a large number of exhibits pertaining to the cult of anarchism in Shanghai, but most of them carry with them the obituaries not of the men they were intended for but of the men who tried to use them. They are the Oriental versions of the Frankenstein monster. Hung about the walls of the museum are a number of flags, some black, some white, all bearing anarchistic inscriptions in English or Chinese. One has the word "Anarchist" in big block letters; others have long inscriptions in Chinese referring to the same subject. These flags were seized from students who participated in a sensational demonstration at Hongkew Park during the Far Eastern Olympiad in 1921. They appeared among the spectators with bombs, pistols, flags and literature in their possession, and the public had to turn out and quell the fight. The bomb exhibits are contained in a glass-faced cabinet. With the exception of a few exhibits of bombs used

during the Revolution, or picked up during the recent war around Shanghai, all these infernal machines were manufactured with the object of destroying some leading member of the Chinese community, and all of them went astray. Some are in boxes, some in jars and bottles. Some exhibits are merely pieces of twisted tin and shattered steel, the remains of exploded bombs. But all of them reveal that traditional Chinese trait of economy—odds and ends costing nothing, put together to kill a man. Imagine anyone making a bomb out of a cigarette tin—or a biscuit box. Yet, most of these exhibits have such material as their basis. A tin picked up in the street, a small quantity of explosive, and there is the bomb.

I described in a previous chapter the death present which was hidden in a bundle of books and was intended to be sent to a leading Chinese merchant whose hobby was collecting rare Chinese books. The bundle of books has a hole cut in to hold the bomb, and the removal of the piece of board inside the cover was meant to explode the bomb. Fortunately, for the merchant, he never received the present, while the anarchist fell victim to his own inexpertness. The bomb exploded in his house and killed him, and police investigations unravelled the plot. The man intended sending the books to the merchant, with a covering letter stating that these were samples of ancient volumes he had discovered.

Another well-known Chinese business man, who has been very active in connection with the recent negotiations regarding the creation of a special civil area, around Shanghai, had a narrow escape from death some years ago. A bomb in the museum tells the story. He received several anonymous letters which he ignored but one day, during his absence, he was sent a basket

of fish with an accompanying letter asking him to accept the fish as a present. The basket was placed in a room and suddenly there was a terrific explosion which completely wrecked the room and would have killed anyone inside it. Fortunately, there was no-one in the room or near it, and thus the infernal machine missed its target.

Newspaper editors are not immune from the attention of anarchists, especially if the anarchists disagree with them. Several years ago someone placed a bomb inside the offices of the "Asiatic Daily News," a Chinese newspaper. The infernal machine was fitted with a time fuse and was placed on the verandah outside the room where the editorial staff were busy moulding public opinion. Promptly at 9 p.m. the bomb exploded, but nobody was injured, the explosion merely breaking a few windows. This explosion led to the arrest of a Chinese constable for complicity, and he eventually was shot at the Arsenal. A few twisted scraps of tin are the chapters in this story.

In 1914 an attempt was made to assassinate General Mei, a Revolutionary General, in Chefoo Road, by throwing a bomb at him. Two days later the police received information that a similar bomb was concealed in an old ricksha in an alleyway off Chefoo Road, a short distance away from the spot where General Mei's life was attempted. The place indicated was

visited by the police and the bomb was found, but it exploded afterwards. This bomb is credited with just a few scraps of rusty tin in the museum and a long file in the police archives.

Looking at the instruments of death exhibited in the cabinet one is amazed to see how innocent they seem. The black, round, ugly smoking thing mentioned in blood-and-thunder novels is not to be seen. One bomb which failed to explode because of the maker's ignorance, looks nothing more dangerous than a pickle jar with three slender test tubes inside it. Originally, this was a very dangerous bomb, the test tubes being filled with fulminating mixtures. When the jar was thrown down the impact would break the jar and the tubes unite the mixtures and would cause a terrible explosion—if the chemical formula employed by the manufacturer had been correct. It wasn't, and one pickle jar and three test tubes are now among the bomb exhibits. A biscuit box bomb is another interesting exhibit. The infernal machine was buried among the biscuits in one corner, and it actually exploded, but all it did was to sever the tin covering that corner.

On the whole, the bomb cabinet stands as a testimonial to the truth of the saying that "a little knowledge is dangerous." In petty thievery and fraud, Chinese "crooks" are unsurpassed, but the anarchist age in Chinese criminology has passed with the losses on the side of the anarchists.



UNCONSIDERED TRIFLES IN THE POLICE CRIME MUSEUM

Walking round the Municipal Police crime museum one continually comes upon objects of no particular distinction or peculiarity which barely succeed in attracting attention unless the visitor is of a very curious frame of mind. You might even say at times that a Peking Road "junk" shop externally is as interesting, but suddenly, by delving into the records, a chain of association is struck which clothes that inobtrusive object with a halo of pulsating interest.

One of these objects is a pair of black satin trousers which hang from a hook in the wall. There is nothing particularly attractive about these trousers, except they are made of satin and might have been used as part of a costume at a fancy dress ball. Also they are baggy and very long, fit vestments for a man of about 7 feet in height, you would imagine. Yet these trousers in themselves and the associations attaching to them reveal a complete story of extensive shoplifting practice by Russians in Shanghai. Never a week passes without complaints being made by Chinese silk shops that Russians have visited their shops, fingered a few rolls of silk and then left without purchasing anything, but after they have gone several rolls of expensive silk are found missing.

This pair of trousers explains the whole shoplifting game. The trick is generally worked by two or three men or a man and a woman. The principal man wears these trousers, which are long and baggy, inside his own trousers. He ties the bottoms tightly with tape around his ankles and while his actions are covered by his confederates he slips several rolls

of silk inside the inner trousers. In this way he is able to walk out of the shop with several hundred dollars' worth of silk safely hidden about his person.

Another item of mystery in the museum is in a gold sovereign which conjures up memories of one of the most brutal murders in Shanghai—the murder of a German pork butcher's wife in February, 1914. The woman was attacked in her bedroom and practically cut to pieces by a gang of several men, who robbed the house of several thousand dollars' worth of money and jewellery. For months the police were scouring the Settlement and outside following up clues, when this sovereign suddenly made its appearance, having been returned from the Arsenal Military Court in 1915. The whole story was disclosed later when several arrests were made and professional robbers were discovered to have worked in collusion with the servants.

One of the Arsenal detectives found that a Chinese sing song girl had been shown a large quantity of foreign jewellery by a robber and had given her a sovereign which was part of the proceeds of the robbery. That sovereign brought the police down on the whole gang, cleared up the murder and resulted in several men, including a butcher and a mafoo, being shot at the Arsenal.

Hanging on the walls of the museum are a number of very crude and quaint Chinese pictures in colour which have a story to tell. They are among the first anti-foreign propaganda disseminated in Shanghai. Anti-foreign propaganda to-day is very common, used by all sorts of fictitious as-

sociations and manipulated by Chinese politicians and agitators, but much more skill is displayed in its use. At the present time it takes the form of cleverly worded manifestoes and declarations in which an appeal to the growing national consciousness of the Chinese is made by labouring the taunt of "trespassing on sovereign rights."

The propaganda exhibits, however, are not clever: they are crude and amusing. Seized during the Boxer trouble of 1900, the pictures were distributed by the thousand among the Chinese in Shanghai and all of them take on the bombastic tone used by the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi and stimulated the fanatical Boxers to attack foreigners. One of these pictures shows a fictitious Chinese victory over foreign warships at Shanhaikwan, the port, and eastern terminus of the Great Wall. Chinese characters triumphantly announce that four warships were sunk and the Russians surrendered, while one Boxer brave covered himself with glory by capturing a warship single-handed. "He swam out to the warships and tied up the paddle wheels with rope so that the ship was helpless," the picture states. Other pictures tell of Chinese successes against the "barbarians"—most of them being purely imaginary accounts.

Recalling a bold, bad robber chief who defied the police for years and used to sail the Whangpoo river and the creek like a shoal water Captain Kid, is a picture of a very villainous-looking Chinese surrounded by smaller pictures of Chinese in chains. This gentleman was the famous Vah Mo-mo, whose fame is still sung among the criminal fraternity and whose name was often used by mothers among the boatpeople to quell incipient rebellions among the naughty youth. Vah Mo-mo was a real pirate with

resource and imagination. His hunting ground was among the boats and small launches, and so clever and resourceful was he—and so chaotic was the conflict of authority on land and water—that he operated for years undisturbed.

At one time his band, hundreds strong, struck terror into the ranks of the boatpeople. He started out by robbing Chinese boats, but he later succeeded in stealing fast steam launches and using them as his fleet. On such vessels he could always escape because there was nothing on the water to touch him. But as Samson's downfall was Deilah, Vah Mo-mo's downfall was a Chinese Delilah, who didn't betray him by bobbing his hair but by the better means of chattering among her friends. The Chinese police got him, and his end came when they chopped off his head at Pootung. Seven of his gang suffered the same fate, while others received long gaol terms. Now Vah's photographic likeness looks down rather shyly on a pictorial object lesson that honesty is the best policy as long as an efficient police force is in the vicinity.

There are other exhibits which tell of the infinite variety of Chinese crime. There is a complete cricket fighting paraphernalia—cricket fighting being very popular once, owners waging hundreds of dollars nightly on their pets. Another exhibit is an incendiary machine which nearly destroyed a godown. This machine comprises clockwork with matches fitted in a disc. The disc revolves and the matches strike on a matchbox behind it. The light then ignites the box of matches and sets the whole crate on fire. Fortunately, it was discovered in time and now reposes harmlessly in the museum.

A very clever faked dicing apparatus is another exhibit. It is composed of a table under which,

hidden away, is a big magnet which can be revolved by pulling a piece of string. The dice are loaded and with the magnet the manipulator of the table was able to get sixes or other numbers whenever he wanted them.

A large number of opium smuggling devices tell of mistaken ingenuity. A safe with a false interior, a chair with a false drawer, a table with a sliding top, metal blocks with opium layers in the middle and a door with a sliding panel which once led to a big opium treasure, are some of them.

Not exactly included among criminal relics are two remarkable maps on which the whole scheme of Shanghai defence during the Boxer trouble was based. At that time the Chinese around Shanghai were in a terrible state of excitement, and there were large numbers of troops in the city who might descend on the Settlement in the same way that troops had attacked the Legation Quarter at Peking. Military information was needed urgently and a Chinese

detective volunteered to get it. He came back with information which enabled the foreign authorities to complete their scheme of defence. Solely from memory he drew plans of the Chinese territory, putting in the military establishments and the numbers of troops, and furnishing valuable information which was found to be correct in every particular.

From this survey of Chinese criminal relics of the past one is induced to speculate on Chinese crime in the future. Will it lose its character of cunning and wile picturesqueness, or will it reach the stage reached in the West where criminals work scientifically compelling the police to use every means and invention in the fight for the survival of law and order? Time will show but while the Chinese mentality registers no changes crime in this country will always be in a class by itself with its perpetrators acting true to Bret Harte's definition that "for ways that are dark and tricks that are vain the heathen Chinese is peculiar."



COLUMBIA LIBRARIES OFFSITE



CU90623541

